

# Highland Park Neighborhood Association

## September 2021 Minutes

Meeting Date: September 14, 2021

President Elizabeth Sanfelippo called the September 2021 meeting of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association (being held via Zoom) to order at 6 pm. She introduced herself and Vice President Mark Ritter and Secretary Judy Jones. Ritter worked on a roll call as required by the city for virtual meetings. She thanked Stephen Foster, former President of the Five Points South Neighborhood, for continuing to set up our neighborhood meetings on Zoom.

Sanfelippo asked if residents had received the August meeting minutes and whether there were any changes or corrections needed. No changes or corrections were noted. Jon Somerset moved to approve the August 2021 minutes. Mark Ritter seconded the motion. There were 6 votes for the motion, no one opposed so the motion carried.

### **Birmingham Police Department Update.**

Sanfelippo said Captain Greenberg was not on the call tonight but noted he had attended the last two meetings. She reminded the group the non-emergency number was 205-328-9311. She told the group not to flip out if someone answers the call saying '911', that the city operators are often working both lines.

Sanfelippo reported seeing an uptick in graffiti activity lately. She told residents to call in anything they see out of the ordinary, that they can also make those calls anonymously as well.

Sanfelippo reported we have a new Public Works Environmental Code Enforcement Officer and that she would get in touch with the individual and invite them to participate on our calls. She said the plan was for the neighborhood to do Zoom meetings for the foreseeable future until COVID was less of an issue.

### **Speaker/Trey Frazier, UAB Associate Athletic Director**

Vice President Ritter introduced the speaker for the evening, Trey Frazier, UAB's Associate Athletic Director of Development who was going to give residents an update on the new UAB stadium and the athletic program. Frazier said there has been a lot of excitement around the program and the stadium in particular, from cutting the program, bringing it back in 2017 – to now, opening a new stadium downtown on October 2 when they play Liberty. Frazier said their hope was the stadium will be an asset for the community, that it is beyond UAB and will make an impact on the city of Birmingham. Frazier said UAB is a huge part of the community and shared that for every thousand students there is a \$50 million annual economic impact to the community. He said since football came back, enrollment has grown each year. He said whereas that wasn't wholly related to football they think that campus engagement and community engagement is a big part of that.

Frazier shared the stadium has 45,000 seats which includes 1700 club seats and 34 suites. He said they will add some outdoor cabanas/suites in the north end zone as well. Frazier said they have the 5<sup>th</sup> largest scoreboard in the country. He said they were putting together season ticket and group packages together. He said packages were family friendly and cost effective. Frazier said season tickets would start at \$75 and run up to \$950 for club seats, that single tickets would start at \$20 and run to \$45. Frazier said there were five home games this year. Frazier said all related information could be found on their website, BlazerGameDay.com, that both tickets and parking could be purchased on this site along with seating and parking maps, tail gate information, etc. He shared a drone aerial photo of the stadium and walked through the different type seats and various stadium amenities for the general public, students and families. Frazier said there had been a misconception there would not be enough parking -but that the stadium would actually have twice the parking that Legion Field had. In response to a question from Ritter, Frazier said the suites were sold out, they were sold as part of the initial funding model before the stadium was even approved, adding that suite holders made a ten year commitment at a certain threshold to help fund the stadium. Frazier said they had approximately 200 club seats left – and that they had inventory in all the seating areas. He said UAB has had about 5000 season ticket holders in the past – and that they have almost hit 10,000 in sales for this year so far. Frazier said they really would like to sell out the first game in the stadium, October 2 at 6:00 pm.

Ritter asked if Councilor Abbott could speak to ‘Citywalk’, the status of that and how it’s going to work with the stadium. Abbott said she could not answer that question. She added the Council had pretty much been kept in the dark and asked if Frazier could shed any light on the question. She said she reads in the paper that they have been giving people meetings, showing them the stadium – and the city had put in \$30 million so perhaps they could get it shown to them. Frazier said he knew that Citywalk would not be ready for this season. He said that when it was ready it would be a really nice huge urban park area that will be set up perfectly for what tailgating is – people setting up tents, walking around, grilling and having a good time. He said he understood they were working from east to west to complete it. He said they were thrilled the stadium is ready on time and if Citywalk is where we fall short, that’s ok, it will be great long term. Abbott said if everything comes to fruition that they’ve shown us, it will be fabulous, people won’t even believe they’re in Birmingham Alabama. A resident asked about the estimated impact to drivers in the area, perhaps traveling on Carraway, trying to get through there during events. Frazier said the BJCC was in charge of the overall construction and has done a ton of research, hired consultants on traffic flow, ingress and egress and where to block streets and divert traffic, so he wasn’t an expert on that topic – but they were also partnering with the WAZE traffic app, and game day is the day to use that app. Frazier said WAZE would certainly help people navigate to the stadium and parking but it would also help drivers get through the area more easily and stay away from problematic areas. He also shared their parking lots would open six hours before kickoff.

Frazier expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk to the neighborhood. Sanfelippo thanked Ritter for arranging Frazier's participation.

Sanfelippo said she had messaged with Christina Argo with the city's Dept. of Transportation, that Argo was going to join the meeting to talk about new micro-transit activities in the city but was out of town. Sanfelippo said she attended a town hall meeting about the scooter, that Downtown residents and businesses were having issues with scooters being left on sidewalks in inappropriate places. She said both Veo and Bolt representatives attended and addressed issues. Sanfelippo said the scooters should be picked up and returned to 'corrals' and that apparently there is a small disincentive for riders to leave scooters elsewhere. She added there was some talk at the town hall of increasing that disincentive. She told residents if they had any questions or issues in the meantime to contact her and she'd try to get Argo to attend the next meeting.

### **City Council Update/Councilor Valerie Abbott**

Sanfelippo introduced and congratulated District 3's newly re-elected Councilor, Valerie Abbott. Abbott thanked the residents who voted for her and also the ones who didn't saying she thanked them for going out and voting, lamenting the city's poor election turnout. Abbott said today the City had approved \$6,990,665 for street paving for this year. She shared the city was on a rolling 5-year plan for paving that would likely end – and that is residents should call 311 if that wanted streets/locations added to the list, that they would need to provide the street names and the cross streets between which paving was requested. Abbott said if citizens don't call in the locations they don't get added to the list and that it was shocking how bad streets can get and that no one calls them in. Abbott said the list was on the city's website (<https://www.birminghamal.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/District-3-Resurfacing-20210519.pdf>). Abbott said the city also approved items related to a partnership with ALEA (Alabama Law Enforcement Agency) in the areas of safety and drug enforcement. She said cameras were a part of that but that there was nothing related to facial recognition software included.

Abbott said they have received a commitment that by noon on this Thursday they will have more information on the Hanover Circle paving project. She said there had been a commitment for a virtual meeting to address resident questions but that hadn't been scheduled yet and residents had received no communications about the project.

### **Community Resource Officer Update/Jasmine Fells**

Sanfelippo said Highland Park's Community Resource Officer, Jasmine Fells, was not on the call tonight.

### **Old Business**

**Graffiti Update.** Sanfelippo said Highland Park's Graffiti Busters had really been working hard to remove recent incidents of graffiti in the neighborhood. She expressed special thanks to Anne Sunkel and Dehryl Mason for leading these efforts. Sanfelippo

said there had been questions about when defacement of property becomes a felony and if defacing US Postal Services receptacles is a felony. She said they had learned the act becomes a felony when damage exceeds \$2500 but that this was hard to establish and enforce. She urged residents with cameras that when they saw graffiti near their camera range to review footage and report anything they found, saying the neighborhood will continue to work with the police department to reduce these occurrences. Abbott shared there was a city ordinance that required private property owners to remove graffiti from their property when it occurs. Sanfelippo relayed a recent neighborhood collaboration with residents of Avalon Condos on removing graffiti from the wall at 31<sup>st</sup> and Highland, thanking residents who participated in that effort.

**Crepe Myrtle Bark Scale Update.** Sanfelippo gave shout out to Marcy Morgenbesser and John Davis saying they both had helped putting out the yellow panels in area crepe myrtles. She said the panels were supposed to attract 'ladybug beetles' which like to eat the invasive 'scales' in many Highland Park crepe myrtles. Sanfelippo gave a shout out to Judy and Adam who are working on mapping affected trees. She expressed hope that a cold winter would help rid the area of the infestation saying they hoped to avoid having to use toxic solutions for the problem. Sanfelippo said the neighborhood would work with area management companies and private residents on the problem and less toxic alternatives to deal with so it won't affect pollinators. She said they will take the panels down in a few weeks – and work with the city to trim back some of the trees. She asked residents who trim infested trees to please bag the brush explaining the scales can be to other trees by air.

**Recycling.** Sanfelippo reminded people that recycling is now the first and third Wednesdays of the month.

**Trash and Brush Pick-up.** Sanfelippo reminded residents the city does not pick up trash and brush from locations with a dumpster. Sanfelippo said Highland Park's next Large Trash and Brush pick-up was September 24.

**Friends of Highland Park Update.** Jones reported they were going to try and meet with the next few days to finish up documentation for 501c3 status. She said they were losing one member, Rowena Frazier, who was moving away from the neighborhood and they were trying to get things to a good place before her departure. She reported recruitment efforts for potential board members adding that if anyone was interested in serving to get in touch with her. She said there were activities in the neighborhood that sometimes need to happen faster than going through city processes, citing resident donations to support crepe myrtle scale mitigation efforts – and that it will be good to have a non-profit destination for these type donations.

**Next Meeting.** Sanfelippo said our next meeting would be via Zoom at 6 pm Tuesday, October 12. She thanked Ritter for arranging for Brent Cotton to be our October speaker, adding that Cotton is the National Sales Manager for the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

Sanfelippo asked for other questions or issues.

Resident Barry Norris reported having a 6-8 inch 'crater' in the alley behind his residence and asked how to get this addressed. John Somerset asked Councilor Abbott if alleys could be added to the city paving list. Abbott replied that alleys could not be added until the streets were paved because in general alleys were not as traveled as city streets. She said her suggestion was to call 311, get the confirmation number they provide and to send that and some photos in an email to her office and they will try to assist. She reminded residents that Council members cannot direct city employees to do anything but that they could advocate on residents' behalf with the city administration. Sanfelippo asked Abbott about recent complaints about overgrown yards in the Lakeview Crescent area. Ritter said he had neighbors who had issues with two overgrown properties at 32<sup>nd</sup> and Lakeview, that they had reported the problem multiple times to 311 but that didn't seem to be working. Abbott said the city continues to have issues with the effectiveness of 311, saying the city had used a software prototype that they had never actually purchased. She said the city had finally approved the money to purchase a system within the last few months and that installation was in progress. Sanfelippo asked if the old 311 requests would be migrated to the new system. Abbott said she didn't know but would ask. She added that the Council had voted to give Highland Park \$6,316 additional dollars from District 3 discretionary funds.

Mary Helen Crowe asked about an apparent delay in a utility project, that Cliff had been marked up several months ago for the second time - but now the marks have worn off the street – and nothing has happened. Abbott said utility project proceed very slowly, adding that when the projects finish, they repave the streets which is wonderful. Abbott said she had a contact at the Water Works and she would ask him if he could send a list of District 3 projects related to water mains. Mary Helen Crowe echoed Barry Norris' concerns about large potholes causing damage to vehicles, saying she had a car that was damaged. Sanfelippo shared there was a city form that could be used to file a claim for that type of damage. Abbott concurred.

Sanfelippo said a resident had asked whether Jefferson County would have a hazardous waste collection day this fall. Abbott said not that they were aware yet. Dr Lee said if he received notification, he would share it immediately.

Being no other questions, Sanfelippo asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Barry Norris moved to adjourn, Mary Helen Crowe seconded the motion.

The September 2021 Highland Park Neighborhood Association meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Judy Jones  
Secretary, Highland Park Neighborhood Association